## A DISCOVERY

**The first novel about the Pennsylvania Germans, and which escaped the attention of our literary historians, was discovered recently in the files of the Atlantic Monthly, where it had remained hidden for upwards of a century. We owe this discovery to William L. Werner, Professor of English Literature at Pennsylvania State University. The story appears in the ECK for today.**

**Professor Werner, whose special field is American Literature, has long looked upon the literature about and by the Pennsylvania Germans as a part of the literature of America. He has frequently assigned topics in this field for M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations. Among these the following may interest our readers:**

1.—"Pennsylvania German in the Reading Adler, 1837-57," by Mildred E. Runyeon, published in condensed form in the **Historical Review of Berks County,** April, 1937.

2.—"The Life and Works of Thomas Harter," by Dorothy Musser (Scheuermann), published in the **ECK** January 22 and 29, 1938 (condensed).

3.—"The Life and Works of Michael A. Gruber" by Donald S. Klopp, published in the **ECK,** April 9, 16, 23, 30, 1938 (condensed).

4.—"Elsie Singmaster," by Mrs. Mary Rice Hess, published in the **ECK,** June 16 to Sept 8, 1956.

5. — "Pennsylvania German Wit and Humor," by Leo A. Bressler, published in the **ECK,** March 23 to May 25, 1957.

6.—"A History and Index of the Pennsylvania German Magazine," by Sara Kathryn Kutz.

7. — "Pennsylvania German Customs in the Stories of Brooke Hanlon and Oma Almona Davies," by Esther M. LeGrand.

8.—"An Index of 's Pennsylvaanisch Deittsch **ECK** of the **Allentown Morning Call,** 1935-45." by Blanche Weisel.

## SING DOCH MIT, MEI SEEL

Ach, wie Bledder hauche,
Uns aus Druwwel brauche—
Sing doch mit, mei Seel!
Wie Gedichte singe,
Goldrich Gsang uns bringe—
Sing doch mit, mei Seel!

Sing doch mit, mei Seel, un lern,
Was die Lieb bereit!
Yubelt siess vun nau un fern
In der Harrebscht Zeit!

Sanft un leis un net fer's Ohr,
Schtilling - weiss, doch geischtlich glor!
Sing doch mit, mei Seel!
'S iss Friehlings Vorgeschein.
Wie Kindheits Traum so rein!—
Sing doch mit, mei Seel!

Sing doch mit, mei Seel, un lern
Was die Lieb bereit!
Yubelt siess vun nah un fern
In der Harrebscht Zeit!
Bledder singe — ken eens verleed, ken bissel bang!
Dod heesst die Dier zu greesschte Freed — un lauter Gsang!

—DIE BUSCHAMSCHEL
Im Oktober, 1957

## IWWER GSCHPUCKE UN HEXE

Dass es Gschpucke gebt, dass es Hexe gebt un dass es Brauecher gebt, sell kann niemand verleegle, ass en gsunder Verschtand hot. Mer lest im Alde Teschtament, dass es Hexe gewwe hot. Die Hex vun Endor waar en wunnervolli Fraa gewest, un ihre Noochfolger sin heit noch in alle Schteddel zu finne. Ya, Hexe sin iwwerall zu finne, yuscht net drowwe in Massachusetts, wu sie bessere colleges un Etschoukaeschon hen. Datt hen sie die Hexe ghenkt, verbrennt odder verseeft, ennihau gans un gaar verdillicht.

Ya, es gebt Hexe, awwer es gebt aa iwwerall Gschpucke. Uffkors, es gebt unnerschiddliche Sadde Gschpucke, awwer die menschte sin vun Leit, ass schlecht waare in ihrem Lewe, un abaddich Leit ass Land gschtohle hen, misse gschpucke nooch ihrem Dod, bis dass ihre nidderdrechtiche Sache, ihre Schtehlerei un Heichlerei in ihrem Lewe recht gemacht watt.

En Mensch, ass Land schtehlt odder en Eckschtee muuft, daer muss der Eckschtee widder an der Blatz duh, eb dass er im Graab widder ruhe kann. Drowwe am Haasebaerrig hot's lange Yaahre gschpuckt. Der ald Elias Haas, hot's als fer alders gheesse, hett seinre Schweschder drei Acker vun ihrem Keschtebusch gschtohle, mit dem ass er der Eckschtee moll ee Nacht rausegegraawe hett un hett en baut drei hunnert Schritt weider niwwer neigegraawe.

Wie er mol dod waar, iss er oft gsehne warre rumlaafe im Busch mit em Eckschtee im Aarem, ass wann er ebbes suche deet. Im Summer un im Winter hen Leit en gsehne, un deel hen ihn aa gheert. "Wu soll ich en hie duh? Wu soll ich ihn hie duh?" hot er gelammediert unni Uffheeres, un des hot er saagge misse, bis dass es ihm ebber uff der recht Weg geandwatt hot un hot ihm gsaat, wu er der Eckschtee anne duh soll!

Moll ee Nacht iss der Hans Bauersack heem vum Haasebaerrig un waar so ebaut drei Vaddel im Tee. Im Deich drunne, so newe am dunkle Busch, — es waar halwer ee Uhr in der Nacht — sehnt er der ald Elias Haas mit me lange Kalkschtee im Aarem geegge ihn zulaafe. Wie gsaat, der Hans waar ebaut drei Vaddel im Tee un sell hot ihm Schpunk un Mut gewwe. Er schtellt sich hinner en dicker Weiss-eeche un waart bis der Schpuck naegscht waar. Dann hot er ihn heere blaudere un saagge: "Wu soll ich ihn hie duh? Wu soll ich ihn hie duh?"

Dann iss der Hannes uff eemol hinnich em Baam raus gschteppt un hot ewwe graad raus gschwetzt:

"Wu du en anne duh sollscht? Ei, du dummer, verschtohlener Dunner, duh en anne, wu'd en grickt hoscht!"

Sell hot's Ding gsettelt. Der ald Haas hot der Schtee widder ar der recht Blatz un dernoh hot er ruhgge kenne im Graab. Noooch sellem hot niemand sei Gschpuck meh gsehne.

Versaebit vum Wendell Kitzmiller
(Dr. Ezra Grumbine, 1865-1923)

# THE FIRST NOVEL ABOUT THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

by WILLIAM L. WERNER

PEOPLE usually think that American fiction about the Pennsylvania Germans started in the late 19th century and flourished in the 20th century in the novels of Elsie Singmaster and Helen R. Martin. This was at the end of the local color period that had begun in the late 1860's with Bret Harte's "Luck of Roaring Camp" and Mark Twain's "The Jumping Frog."

But looking through the files of the Atlantic Monthly, I discovered what seems to be the first novel about the Pennsylvania Germans: "The Foe in the Household" by Caroline Chesebrough (or Chesebro') It ran serially in the Atlantic from March through December, 1869, and was published in book form by Estes, Lauriat and James R. Csgood Co., Boston, 1871.

I asked one of my Penn State graduate students, Miss Loa Jane Packard, in the spring of 1955 to find out more about the obscure author, and a year later I asked another graduate student, Frank Heavner, to try to determine the geographical location of the story. What follows is the fruit of their researches with additions by Dr. Barba and myself.

Miss Chesebrough was not a Pennsylvania German and probably never lived in Pennsylvania. She was born in March 1825 in Canandaigua, New York, and was educated there. At the age of 23 she began writing stories and articles for such famous magazines as the Knickerbocker, Putnam's, Harper's and the Atlantic. The first of her many books of fiction, "Dreamland by Daylight," appeared in 1852. Her stories, sentimental and moralistic like those of Mrs. Stowe and other feminine authors then, were very popular in serial and book form. She wrote of a variety of settings and for both adults and children; at least one, "Das Blockhaus in dem Berge," was in German (New York, 1871). Yet writing was only a leisure-time occupation; from 1865 until her death in 1873, she taught English at the Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn, N. Y.

The New York Daily Tribune gave her a glowing obituary notice, Feb. 19, 1873. It said in part: "She possessed rare mental endowments which placed her in the front rank of American novelists . . . Her various works of fiction evidenced an order of thought, even of genius, which is seldom exhibited in our native literature, and which is not measured by the degree of popular success which crowned her efforts . . . The keenness of her perceptive faculties was softened and irradiated by the tender glow of ideal sentiment. . . ."

I quote Miss Packard's summary of her only Pennsylvania German novel, "The Foe in the Household" deals with the Mennonite church and its people. It is mainly concerned with the struggle that the younger members meet when they fall in love or marry outside their strictly governed church. The setting is a valley in Pennsylvania where the two main businesses are farming and coal mining.

"The protagonist is Delia Rolfe Holcombe. She is the daughter of a Mennonite bishop and she secretly marries a young mining engineer and heir, Edward Rolfe. The couple intend to make the marriage known after the death of Delia's father, but Rolfe is killed a few months after the marriage. She bears him a daughter, Edna, while she is visiting away from her community.

"When she returns without the child, she is encouraged by her father to marry a rising young minister of the Mennonite sect. She refuses for seven years, but is finally persuaded to marry Friend Holcombe, and she bears him a daughter, Rosa. Her first daughter is returned to the community and adopted by Delia and her husband.

"With this as a background, the rest of the novel is concerned with her struggles with her conscience and with her fears that Father Trost — the Methodist minister who married her and Rolfe — will reveal her secret in one of his bitter attacks against her church. Since she is now a leader and her husband a bishop in the Mennonite church, revelation of her secret will bring disgrace and riricule on her church.

"A fortune-hunter from the mining operations, John Eagan, wants to marry the daughter Edna and moves the story to a climax by demanding for Edna the property to which she is the rightful heiress. Delia then confesses her marriage and asks the Mennonite congregation for forgiveness. Remembering her many kind and good deeds, they forgive her; after the first shock, she is reconciled with her husband and dies in peace. Edna finds a true "gentleman" instead of the fortune-hunter, and Father Trost repents his hatred of the Mennonites before he dies. All through the story a moralizing country doctor moves, freely commenting and advising on the events."

Mr. Heavner, discussing the location of the story, says, "The red shale, anthracite and iron ore combination in the descriptions strongly suggests the area where Lebanon, Dauphin and Schuylkill Counties come together. The Cornwall iron mine is very little south of this region, the anthracite veins extend almost to that mine, and red shale runs irregularly through the area.

"Swatara, the chief town in the novel, is the name of a town and a creek north of Hershey; the Blue Mountains are not far away; and "Ancaster" and "Hollandsburgh" suggest Lancaster and Holland to the southeast."

Mr. Heavner, Dr. Barba and I all agree that Miss Chesebrough intended her "Swatara" to be in the real Swatara region, but that she had never been there. There is no detailed local color. There are only the faintest traces of language coloration and colloquialisms. The descriptions of dress are not detailed; the lack of buttons is mentioned, but "uncouth bonnets" and "simple garb" are not very informative.

Most indicative of Miss Chesebrought's unfamiliarity with her characters is her confusion of "Pennsylvania Dutch" with Holland Dutch. She writes, "Some Dutch blood flowed in Mary's veins," and "scrubbing with Dutch ardor" and of "the honest Hollander," a common error among outsiders who confuse "Deutsch" with Dutch.

As one reads this novel in the Atlantic Monthly for 1869, one cannot avoid running across an article on "Pennsylvania Dutch" by Mrs. Phebe Earle Gibbons in the October issue. Though also an outsider she lived for a time in Bird-in-Hand, Lancaster County, and knew details of dress, speech, religion, food, games, etc. She knew that the Pennsylvania Dutch were really Germans. Though her article drew some unfavorable comments in Pennsylvania and Ohio (as Earl Robacker reports in his "Pennsylvania German Literature"), it was so generally popular that Mrs. Gibbons later wrote additional articles and published a book, "Pennsylvania Dutch and Other Essays," in 1872.

One question remains for curious readers: what brought this novel and this essay suddenly and simultaneously to this Boston magazine? The editor of the Atlantic from 1861 to 1870 was James T. Fields, also well known as a publisher, the man who had induced Hawthorne to make a novel out of "The Scarlet Letter" manuscript in 1849. He knew little about the Pennsylvania Germans and had no interest in them.

But his assistant editor in 1869 was William Dean Howells, and "from April to November 1869, Fields turned over his editorial duties to assistant editor Howells and vacationed with Annie (Mrs. Fields) in Europe." Howells had grown up in Ohio, his mother was Mary Dean, and her mother was a Pennsylvania German of the Dock family of Harrisburg, Pa.

No doubt the Chesebrough novel had been contracted for by Fields before he left for Europe; the author was well known to Atlantic readers. Whether the appearance of her Pennsylvania German novel aroused Mrs. Gibbons to submit her article, we do not know, but the time from the first installment of the serial in March to the appearance of the article in October (seven months) would be about right for such a deduction.

We can see Howells as one factor in engineering a rise in interest in the Pennsylvania Germans in 1869. In the same year Wollenweber's "Gemaelde aus dem Pennsylvanischen Volksleben" was published in Philadelphia. Mrs. Gibbons's articles continued in the Atlantic; Lippincott published her book in Philadelphia in 1872, and Howells reviewed it favorably in the October Atlantic. "The Foe in the Household" appeared in book form in 1871. Harbaugh's "Harfe" had been published in 1870; S. S. Haldeman's linguistic study, "Pennsylvania Dutch" appeared in London and Philadelphia in 1872. Rachel Bahn's little book of "Poems" was issued in York in 1869.

We have then a much earlier date for the first novel about the Pennsylvania Germans, and a new year, 1869, as the beginning of general American interest in Pennsylvania German culture.